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SUBJECT: MELES IN COPENHAGEN: ETHIOPIA GIVES CAVEATED APPROVAL

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) In the aftermath of the December 2009 United Nations Framework Convention's Fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) meeting in Copenhagen, Ethiopia has mixed reactions to the Accord. As Chair of the African Union (AU) Conference of African Heads of State and Governments on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), Ethiopian PM Meles was named head of the African delegation of over 50 countries in August 2009. Meles advanced an AU continent-wide position in Copenhagen that contained mitigation, adaptation, and technical transfer components to mixed reviews back on the continent. Despite criticisms by civil society and representatives from countries such as Sudan regarding the issue of adaptation financing, Ethiopian officials are quick to point out that Meles was sanctioned by African Union member states to officially represent Africa on climate change issues. As such, Meles' agreements in Copenhagen are the official African position regardless of critical statements emanating from other African officials.

12. (SBU) Civil society and government officials both agree that Copenhagen put climate change issues on the map by starting a serious dialogue that is moving in the right direction, with U.S. engagement alone rendering the conference a success. While the government of Ethiopia is satisfied with USD 100 billion in adaptation financing beginning in 2020 that Meles accepted, civil society felt this figure was too low and not science-based. Ethiopia's civil society also expressed disappointment with developed countries' carbon emissions pledges, and would like to see the U.S. take on a greater leadership role moving

forward. End Summary.

MIXED REVIEWS

¶3. (SBU) The Regional Environment Officer (REO) met with the Director General Manager (DGM) of the Ethiopia Environmental Protection Agency (EEPA) Dasalegn Mesfin and the Director of the civil society organization the Forum for Environment (FfE), Negusu Aklilu, to discuss the role of the African delegation in Copenhagen's climate change negotiations and overall perceptions post-conference. While both agreed that much work needs to be done regarding mitigating global carbon emissions, there were mixed reviews regarding the PM Meles' decision to accept climate change adaptation figures in the amount of \$100 billion annually beginning in 2020.

POSITIVE IMPRESSIONS

¶4. (SBU) Both the EEPA Mesfin and FfE Negusu agreed that Copenhagen placed climate change discussions on the map and that climate change dialogue is moving in the right direction. Both said that the mere fact that the USG was actively engaged renders the UNFCCC a success, with Negusu adding that negotiations would neither be credible nor valid without U.S. involvement. Both approached the Copenhagen negotiations from a practical and realistic standpoint, recognizing political realities and economic drivers at play, which left neither disappointed nor surprised by the Accord's outcome. Both regarded agreement on a two degree temperature reduction objective and a compromise regarding transparency in reporting as breakthroughs.

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¶5. (SBU) In terms of adaptation financing, EEPA Mesfin noted that the Africa delegation "got what we asked for (in terms of adaptation funding amounts), it was the prime focus and they (developed countries) accepted." Recognizing that \$100 billion annually beginning in 2020 fell far short of some expectations, Mesfin emphasized that this sum is just a first step. He said the sum of \$100 billion should be positively viewed as a goodwill gesture that demonstrates the developed countries' understanding of Africa's plight and that it is a step toward "reconciling." Negusu, on behalf of the civil society in Ethiopia, regarded the financing agreement as encouraging but falling short of Africa's needs.

REMAINING WORK TO BE DONE

¶6. (SBU) Mitigation: Ethiopia's civil society is disappointed with country mitigation pledges put forward in Copenhagen. Negusu's FfE continues to call on the United States to take on a leadership role and increase its carbon emissions pledge beyond 17 percent. A 2009 International Visitor and Leadership Program (IVLP) participant to the U.S., Negusu noted that he is aware of the U.S. political constraints at play. (Note: Negusu said that he took the time to explain the U.S. legislative system to many of his colleagues and counterparts at the conference, trying to help them to better understand the difficulties faced by President Obama and to help them manage their expectations. Negusu noted his surprise to find that many thought the President would drop into the conference, make sweeping proclamations, and save the conference. End note.). Regardless of political constraints, Negusu insists that carbon reduction pledges like the United States' 17 percent are not science based and will not achieve the two degree objective agreed to in the Copenhagen Accord. Negusu also attributes other countries' backtracking from initial pledges of 20-30 percent down to 15-25 percent to a lack of U.S. leadership.

¶7. (SBU) EEPA Mesfin recognized what he called the Accord's shortcomings in the carbon emissions category, but noted that this is a global problem for all countries to address. The fact

that numbers fell short of Africa's expectations, in his estimation, is not a failure on the part of Meles or the Africa delegation. Carbon emissions targets are a global challenge for all nations to confront during ongoing negotiations. Africa will continue to voice its concerns, asserting a moral pressure on developed countries, but ultimately, Mesfin says that resolution will be the responsibility of the U.S., the EU, and China and other large emerging economies.

¶8. (SBU) Adaptation: Negusu said that going from zero to a sum of \$100 billion annually beginning in 2020, coupled with a near term \$10 billion figure, is encouraging but not adequate. He argued that the figures are not science based and are insufficient to address Africa's mounting needs given that the funds will be divided among at least thirty countries. Negusu also said that climate change adaptation funds should be additional to existing official development assistance (ODA), a component of the Accord that currently lacks clarity. He also asserts that adaptation funds for Africa should not be administered through conventional financial mechanisms such as the World Bank or GEF because of issues such as lack of transparency, difficult access, a non-inclusive decision making process, and high administrative costs. Negusu wants to see Accord language regarding the Green C Fund made more robust so that it can take on the role of adaptation funds manager.

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¶9. (SBU) EEPA Mesfin repeatedly asserted that the GoE, the AU CAHOSCC, and Africa in general are happy with the adaptation financing for Africa decision taken in Copenhagen. According to Mesfin, this issue is unique for Africa, a top priority, and Meles was awarded the amount he proposed - an amount the CAHOSCC agreed to in advance of the conference, that took global political and economic factors into account. He continued that as the global financial situation improves, he is certain that Africa will receive increased support from the international community. He also noted the important role of the carbon trading regime, praising efforts taken in Copenhagen to simplify barriers so as to enable Africa to participate in, and benefit from, the mechanism. Mesfin thinks that this type of financial tool is key to unlocking Africa's human potential, linking development to market demand.

¶10. (SBU) Regarding criticism that Meles "sold out Africa for his own country's interests," as reported by some media, Mesfin advised that this type of reporting be disregarded as misguided, uninformed, and undisciplined criticism emanating from Sudan and others. He pointed out that Sudan, as a member of CAHOSCC, sanctioned Meles to speak for, and negotiate on behalf of, the continent of Africa. He concluded by saying that "Africa benefited the most in Copenhagen, we got what we wanted for us."

¶11. (SBU) Other concerns: Negusu was frustrated by what he sees as the UNFCCC's lack of transparency in Copenhagen, particularly given that non-governmental organizations were barred from participating in conference sessions due to lack of space. Moreover, Negusu and other civil society representatives were disappointed by what they viewed as a non-participatory exercise, alleging that the Accord's final text was ultimately the product of the United States and four other countries. He complained of a heavy-handed crowd control police force that did not showcase developed countries' commitment to freedom of expression, the right to gather, and respect for the rule of law. He expressed concerns that the final text of the Accord had omitted a deadline for establishing a legally binding deal. While his expectations are low regarding reaching a legally binding agreement in the near term, Negusu said FfE will continue its campaign to press for a deal. To date, FfE has gathered over two million signatures on a petition that calls upon the USG to take a leadership role in reaching a final binding agreement.

COMMENT

¶12. (SBU) Despite media reports that highlight discontent with the Meles-led delegation to Copenhagen, the general consensus is one of mild success. Civil society and government officials alike recognize that significant work needs to be done in the months and years ahead to ensure the establishment of a robust international agreement, one they hope will transition from the present Accord to an internationally legally binding document. The majority of voices in Ethiopia, both from the government and civil society, recognize Copenhagen as a first step toward that end objective. Disappointed by carbon emission pledges and adaptation financing figures lower than many had hoped, the positive spin generated to counter negative media is that Africa asserted its position under Meles and Africa's climate change challenges were recognized and validated by the international community in Copenhagen. With climate change issues now on the table, most in Ethiopia agree that the international community is moving in the right direction. End Comment.

#MUSHINGI

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